

## **Jerry Jaccard History**



**Brigham Young University School of Music  
Associate Professor of Music, 1995-2014  
Interview with Jerry Jaccard  
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**Melanie Palsky: Where were you raised, and what was your education like?**

Jerry Jaccard: I was born in Pasadena, California. For a brief period, I lived in Los Alamos, New Mexico while my dad worked in the atomic energy lab there. I grew up in Tucson, Arizona, from the age of seven, so I just stayed at home and did my bachelor's degree at the University of Arizona. I came to BYU after my mission and started a master's degree. I got all my course work done, wrote two theses, transferred six credits to Holy Names University and did my master's program all over again there. So I really have two master's degrees, minus one thesis. And I have a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

**Tell us about your conversion and mission experiences.**

Well, that's interesting. The reason I went on a mission after graduating from college is because I was a convert to the church just as I left my senior year in high school. When I turned 19, I wanted to go on a mission like everyone else. I was only 17 when I graduated from high school and started college. I was the only one of the four children in my family who went to college, and my parents wanted to have at least one child to graduate from college.

I consulted with my bishop about that, there at the Institute of Religion in Tucson, and he said, "You'll probably do more missionary work by honoring your parents' wishes than if you go off and go on a mission." He was right. Six months before I graduated from college and went on my mission, my mother joined the church.

Paul H. Dunn set me apart as a missionary. In those days, all missionaries were set apart by general authorities. He promised me that my father would join the church. Two weeks after I started my mission, I got a letter from my dad; he'd been baptized.

I went to the Franco-Belgian Mission in Brussels, Belgium. I served in three countries: Belgium, France and Luxembourg, and learned many different dialects of French. There were nine different languages spoken in our mission, so standard French was the language we all used, but we would have to make some adjustments from town to town.

**How did your career in elementary music education start?**

My graduate assistanceship at BYU was with The Sounds of Freedom. One of my good friends from that program was Wilford Numkano, a Hopi Indian. He and I instantly bonded. I'm from Arizona, and I grew up with Indian kids. Wilford just became family friends to my wife and I, and we ended up going on tour with The Sounds of Freedom, which is one of the parent groups of the Young Ambassadors.

We went down to all the Indian Schools in Arizona and New Mexico, and we ended up in Monument Valley in a little town called Kayenta. It had red sand dunes and beautiful monuments all over the place. I looked out into that audience and absolutely fell in love with those kids. Before the tour bus left, I went and found the principal, and I asked if there were any jobs left. He said, "We're looking for two teachers for next year, a music teacher and an art teacher." And I said, "Well, how ironic, my wife is an art teacher." She was teaching at Patient High School. And I came back and told her about this experience, and she, being an Arizona girl, said, "Are you crazy?" I asked her to come down with me during Easter break and check it out. She ended up having the same experience that I had.

So, the following year, here we are in the middle of Monument Valley teaching at Monument Valley High School in Kayenta, Arizona. That year, I had some extra time. If I arranged my schedule so that my wife taught one of my classes (she had a music minor here from BYU), I had

an extra hour every day.

I was frustrated by how little the high school kids and junior high kids really knew about music. They were just pushing buttons on instruments. I went to the elementary principal and said, "Is there a class I could teach? I would just like to see if I could try some things I've learned in college." And she said, "Well, we used to have a music specialist here in the elementary school, but he kept coming to school drunk. So we got rid of him and we haven't hired anyone since." She knew, though, that I was LDS, and she was Baptist. She said, "We'll give you a try. The best thing I can do is put your offer on the teachers' bulletin board and we'll see what happens."

Two teachers signed up, the kindergarten and the first grade teacher. I had been told by colleagues at BYU and some teachers out in the field, "Don't go into the Navajo Reservation, don't, they'll never sing, they don't like to sing." Well, within the first week, that myth was totally destroyed. A little five-year-old kindergarten boy crawled into my lap, put his arms around my neck, and started singing with me, and that was the end of my high school teaching career and the beginning of my elementary career. I never knew that I would end up teaching at a college level, because I mainly am a practitioner who teaches kids. But now I teach adults about teaching kids.

### **Can you tell us more about your college and graduate education experiences?**

Well, I've always loved school; I've loved being a student and being a teacher. It was really powerful for me to be a brand new member of the church at the University of Arizona for my undergraduate years. Southern Arizona, where the University of Arizona is in Tucson, has a pioneer heritage with the church. It was at the institute there that I connected with a lot of the LDS kids, some of whom were in the University of Arizona Band with me, so we were a special group within the institute group. We provided a lot of music there for the institute services. We did recitals. One year I was called to be the Ward Chorister, and the university had what was called a Spring Sing, which was a choral contest between all of the fraternities and sororities and the religious groups. We won second place.

One of the members of the institute was a fellow music major, Jenna Brinkerhoff. She was the niece of Alexander Shrinier, who used to be the Tabernacle Organist—a great Tabernacle Organist—and she wrote this incredible a capella arrangement of "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair." We sang that, and we knocked the socks off the audience.

Those undergraduate years were very formative for me as a church member. My sophomore year, I got into an institute class on the Pearl of Great Price, and it was the first time I had read the Pearl of Great Price. Everything was new to me. Literally right after that class, the very next hour, across the street from the institute building, I took astronomy for my science requirement. Here I was, looking at all these slides, and the observatory, everything in this glorious universe. In one ear was all this scientific information, and the mathematical formulas for calculating distance. And in the other ear, I was hearing this wonderful testimony of Abraham, Enoch, and Moses, about the cosmos and the creation. It was very powerful to me. It just put everything together. It was thrilling.

I concurrently graduated from the university and from the institute, so I had two diplomas and two majors. I was proud of that.

There were two parts to my BYU school experience. One was before going onto the Navajo Reservation and one was the summer after I had been on the reservation. I spent that whole summer at BYU taking child development courses, and that is where a change really happened in my thinking. That one class in child development was a brutal class.

The teacher was from Iran, was not a member of the church, and was hostile to the church. There were a few instances where some of the people in the class were in tears, because of how he challenged the church. He was a very fine teacher, but he had this weakness—he obviously was anti-Mormon. I can't say that we pushed back, but we found some humorous ways to let him know it wasn't appreciated. We liked him as a teacher, we liked the course and material, but we did not like him using us as a trapped audience to vent his opinions.

That was a very pivotal course, because he taught us very well how to do clinical observation of children in the Piaget style. That was very powerful to me. I kind of found my research chops in that class. That was really helpful to me and became the foundation for my other master's degree research, and for my doctoral research.

### **How did you come to BYU?**

I had an interesting experience one day when I was teaching public school. It was four o'clock one afternoon and I was doing my lesson plans for the next day. The thought came to me, "Is this what I'm supposed to be doing?" I loved my work; I loved teaching children. I thought, "Is this what I'm supposed to be doing 25 years from now, when I am ready to retire?" I said, "No, there's something else you're supposed to do, but what is it? Are you supposed to go to BYU?" And then I decided, "I need to go to BYU." I decided to write to them and find out, one, if they need a person like me, and two, what I had to do to qualify.

I wrote Newel Dayley, who was the head of the department. He said, "It just so happens, we have a position that is held by one full-time person and four part-time people." He told me that they were anticipating some changes and asked me to stay in touch. He told me, "You have to have a doctorate to work here. Stay in touch with me annually over the next four years." So I did. I wrote him a letter every year.

This is before internet. We had the telephone, but we always did things in letters, because then you had a record of the conversation. We stayed in touch, and as I got to the end of my coursework, the question became, "Have you had your dissertation proposal approved?" I told him yes. He asked, "Well, have you started writing?" "Yes." "Well it looks like we are going to have an opening and I'd like for you to apply." They did a nationwide search, and that was in 1992. I came out here, and there were three of us who auditioned, and I was chosen. I finished my dissertation here in two years.

### **So you finished your dissertation for the University of Massachusetts while at BYU?**

Yes. For my dissertation, I did a lot of interviewing, which is absolutely wonderful. I interviewed some of my European mentors, as well as American mentors, and I found out a lot. Of course, in leading up to a dissertation, you have to do a lot of preliminary studies to determine viability. Then you have to defend those and your proposal. There's a lot of steps. I think my first draft of my dissertation was 450 pages, and I sent it to my advisor at the University of Massachusetts, and she wrote back, and she said, "This is really wonderful, which of these two dissertations do you really want to write?" She said, "You really only need about 250 pages. You have two different ideas going on here."

That was exciting to me, because my big fear was that I wouldn't be able to produce anything that was passable, and that wasn't the issue at all. It was too much, and somehow it separated itself into the two different topics. Through her eyes, I was able to say, "Oh yeah, I see that now," and then I just followed one path, and it worked out quite easily.

Well, what's interesting is, my advisor was back at the University of Massachusetts for my dissertation, and I was here at BYU; and it was just when the internet became available, so we did it entirely on the internet. A couple of times I sent a couple of packages, thick packages, to her, but it was mainly via the internet. It was a breakthrough. Two years before, I would have been typing, and it would have taken much longer.

**Did you ever follow up on that second path?**

Yes. I'm actually writing a book about that right now. That book is half-written. I also have another book being published right now, in May. The other book, the other track, you know, because you don't really turn your dissertation into a book very often—too academic—but the track that I had to drop is half done. That is a book on pedagogy.

**May I ask what you wrote for your dissertation?**

I did a conceptual model based on qualitative interviewing and some three small statistical samples of student learning. It sampled both adults and children. I read it all the time. It actually framed the rest of my research for the rest of my career.

**When you first came to BYU, what kind of curriculum were you teaching, working on, and how did the department change as you worked with it?**

Well, my first assignment was from the coordinator of music education. It was to work with Sister Kenney to re-write the course sequence that the students of our new program, Elementary Music Education, would follow. The program was designed to teach them elementary music pedagogy. So we came up with a fall-winter-fall-winter course sequence and we worked on that together. At first I taught all four of those courses, and as her responsibilities changed, and morphed more into the new program, she then took the first fall-winter half and then I took the second fall-winter half. I also supervised the student teaching.

**You said when you first started, email wasn't out, so you were doing a lot of letter writing. What other technologies came out that really influenced your field of work?**

We already had computers when I started my career, and that's a whole funny story. While I was in Hartford, Connecticut, I became aware that in the classrooms at elementary schools, the new Apple 2s and the Macintoshes were the thing to have. So I took a class in PCs. PCs were new in the early 80s; mid-80s is when they really became affordable. You'd read in *Popular Mechanics*, "This is the new technology, you'll soon be able to do desktop publishing." It was a pipe dream for years, but then finally it happened.

I was released as the bishop of the Hartford ward in 1986, and I just took that extra time and started researching computers. Someone said to me, "Well, why don't you go down to the Xerox store?"—those were the big desktop computers—"and just get acquainted with them?" I had kids who were in junior high, and some were getting ready for high school. I could see what was coming. It was in the air. Everyone knew that desktop publishing was a coming thing.

So I spent half an hour at the Xerox store in downtown Hartford. After half an hour, I still had not written a letter. It was so hard to break through the coding barrier to get to the word processing. Then I had to learn how to deal with the word processing scripts. An hour later I had gotten a letter written. I thought in my head, "I'm not going to be the only one using this computer in my house. There's going to be Sister Jaccard, who's the Stake Girls' Camp Director; and our kids would use it, too; we've got six children." In regards to the Xerox computer, I said, "This is not going to work." So I went to the Apple store, or the Macintosh store. In the half hour that I was

there, I wrote more than the letter I had written with the Xerox. It just clicked. It was so intuitive. So, we saved like crazy to get a Macintosh. It was just a plain old Macintosh, the basic Mac. We still have it. We don't use it anymore, but I wrote my dissertation on it.

**Tell us a little about your involvement in genealogical work.**

Being a convert to the church, I started doing family history right when I was baptized, and I've been doing it ever since. I actually have taught at the Salt Lake Genealogy Institute in Swiss research, because my family's from Switzerland.

Our family, the Jaccards, come from one little tiny village in the tops of the Jura mountains in Switzerland. My ancestors are not ethnically French, they're Swiss; but French is the language, until you get to a certain point, and then it's all dialect. There are thousands and thousands of them, because our line goes back to 1350 when the surname first appeared.

I have twenty separate Jaccard lines that eventually end up converging, because the Jaccard family was the most numerous family in the village. They began adopting double surnames, so that cousins wouldn't intermarry.

**Is there one work in particular that you think is your best written work?**

I think this book that's coming, that will be out in May, before I retire—I'm retiring September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014—that would be the one. It's *A Tear in the Curtain: The Musical Diplomacy of Erzsébet Szönyi: Musician, Composer, Teacher of eachers*.

She is a remarkable woman. She turns 90 next month, and I was hoping to have the book in her hands by her birthday, but I'm going to miss it by a week or two, I think.

That's not my fault, it's the publisher's. They have, I think, 50,000 titles in their catalogue. They have too much volume running through their presses.

**What are some other accomplishments that you've had that really stick out to you as being important?**

I married the right girl. That is a whole wonderful story in itself, but there is no question in my mind that our Father in Heaven guided me and her to each other. I think that's why He moved our family to Tucson from southern California; and it happened at just at the right time in my life, just as I was leaving on my mission. The year before, we had met in a roadshow at the institute. She came to BYU and she never attended the University of Arizona except for that one summer that we were both there, and we ended up in a roadshow together, and we started writing back and forth all during my senior year and developed a friendship. She wrote me all during my mission, and I wrote to her. There were other people, but it became very clear to me that she was the one, and vice versa.

We got engaged a month after I got back from my mission. That was an easy thing, and in those days, things were a lot less complicated. I don't know why. It was just less complicated. I think because our parents came from the Depression era, everyone understood that you just worked together. You didn't have to have a car, you didn't have to have a down payment on a house, you just got married because you loved each other. We've had a very easy, wonderful relationship. There's a miracle in that—to me—because it turns out she comes right straight through Brigham Young's line, through his younger brother, Lorenzo Dow Young. As a convert, to be sealed into that family is beyond my explanation. It's such a great blessing. It's a family that was down in the

colonies; they came out during the Exodus in 1912. There are lots and lots of stories about them, and they experienced lots and lots of miracles.

My wife is just a great person. I'd be nothing without her. So that's an accomplishment.

Also, another accomplishment is our five children plus our one foster child. Our foster child joined our family when I was bishop of the Hartford ward. A family had joined the church, and it was a divorced mother and two teenaged children. The mother was mentally ill. We had a family council and decided that we would take her into our house.

The State of Connecticut would take a mentally ill person, hold them for two weeks, and put them out in the street and not tell the family. The state just had some very poor mental health programs. My wife found her sleeping in a car in downtown Hartford, which is a very rough place, and just invited her to come stay with us. The son was living with his father, so we rounded up the daughter and we raised her from the age of 14.

She's our Cinderella girl. She went to Ricks and met a wonderful young man. She supported him on his mission with letters and goodies and things. They got married. The young man is Elder Scott's nephew. That has been a blessing in her life and a blessing in our life. So I think our family's an accomplishment.

Professionally, I think one of the accomplishments that I'm happiest about is when I was hired at BYU. I was thrilled that they wanted me to come, but I thought that if I were to come, I would need to stay real. I am a teacher of children, and I wanted to know if would I be allowed to go out into schools and create a place for my BYU students to go? At that time, there were no professional music specialists in elementary schools in Provo. There were less than a handful in the whole state of Utah. So I went to the curriculum director of the Provo schools, and I ended up here at Wasatch Elementary, volunteering many hours a week. It came out of my hide. I said, "Let me just show you what I'm talking about instead of doing it." Pretty soon, I'm bringing the BYU students. After a couple of years, I got a magic phone call from the school board saying, "We have figured out a way to pay for this; could you get us a teacher to every one of our schools?" They wanted them full-time, salaried, and benefited. So, I feel that's an accomplishment. I think that's just from having a vision, believing in it, and being willing to make some sacrifices for it. It was a lot of hard work, but that's the kind of work I've chosen to do.

**Along those same lines, what advice would you have for your student teachers, and those who are thinking of going into teaching?**

To me, life is very simple. One, be believing. I've noticed that it's easy in academia for some people to get stuck into constantly question and constantly argue about what is so obviously true. It's never been a problem for me. Just leave it alone, and particularly at this university where we are able to discern truth, stop trying to play the world's game. If it's true, do something about it. Put it into practice. Make it apply. So that's a very positive faith-based attitude. Yes, we should look at other opinions and decide through our discernment, our spiritual gifts, whether it is right, what we can do within our scope of influence and whether it is even worth spending our time on. I believe that spending time on children is the hope of this world. Unfortunately, even at this university, there is a totem pole, and the education of children is not high on that totem pole. Doctrinally, it is, but economically, it is not considered really viable. That's sad that we can't make that distinction. I know that this is being recorded on tape but it's the truth!

Believe in the vision, and believe that children are capable of so much more than we think they are. Expand your opinion of children. Try harder things with them; raise your expectations. They're ready to go. They can do anything that you ask them to do as long as it's reasonable,

child-centered, and emotionally warm to them. You don't have to train them to do it. Training and education are two different things. You need to have a knowledge of what is developmentally and age appropriate for them; and believe in yourself.

I always say this in all my classes. "You think that you have come here to learn how to teach so you can go out and get a job and have a paycheck and have a career. A lot of you will end up having that career at home, but you will be a teacher, a great teacher of your children. They'll read earlier; they'll know a lot of information; musically they'll do a lot of great things because of you. This isn't about a job. You have to look beyond that job, because we believe in Zion. And guess what the primary activity of Zion will be? All of the economic issues, the rich/poor issues, the health issues will be resolved. All that will begin to matter is the accumulation of light and truth. That's what teaching and learning is all about. We will rule—teachers will rule in Zion. So, you have to prepare for that. You have to prepare yourself spiritually for that."

### **Is there any advice you'd give to the person who is taking over your position?**

There are a lot of administrative demands and academic demands on professors. To me, the great rule of teaching is the Savior's rule, and that is to be motivated by love. Love your students, love your subject, love life, love the Lord. If you have those things lined up, everything falls into place.

Students at a big institution like this are easily lost. I was a BYU bishop and I heard lots and lots of students who were struggling with teachers, for whom the subject became more important than the student. For these teachers, the process of grading and testing, became more important than the student's well being. There are many fine professors here, but it just takes a handful of those who do not have their priorities straight to really make a few students very unhappy. Love, I think, is the answer—to be as Christ-like as possible.

### **Do you have any last stories, advice, or anything you want to share?**

I have to say that I have some wonderful friends here in the school of music and in the college. Probably the other closest friends I have are in the locker room of the Richards Building. I exercise and swim a lot to stay healthy.

There's only one thing that we can take out of this life, and that's relationships. Relationships with our Father in Heaven, with our Savior, with our family, with our friends. In the locker room, I have learned so much about this campus, and the expertise, and the wonderful hearts and minds that teach at this university.

Take opportunities to find out what's going on outside of your department and outside of your college, because a university is named after the universe. There's a lot of truth out there.

There's one more thing I wanted to say. When they tore down the Smith Family Living Center and put up the Joseph Fielding Smith Building, the Brethren specifically designated that whole second floor as the Education in Zion Exhibit. I require all of my classes to go there, and I go myself a couple of times a year, because I feel that is a special place that connects our academic side with our spiritual side, and brings them together. It's a place of great inspiration. All of my students are very inspired by that. I know that the Brethren put a lot into that. I know the brother quite well who was commissioned to do that. His name is Brother Terry Warner, one of my Richards Building locker friends, and every time I saw him there, I got a report, and asked him about how things were going. That was a spiritual struggle for him, where he had to seek a lot of inspiration.



The university made a short film about the Education in Zion exhibit, and some of our music students were involved in the interviews, which are on the film. I've been waiting for that to be shown in our college, and it never has been shown, and it bothers me that it hasn't.

There are many professors in it and some wonderful things that are said. We sometimes get so caught up in the business of being academic that we forget our other business, that's to be driving our academics, and that is, spiritual.

And I don't say these in a critical way, but we all want BYU to be the best it can be, and sometimes I think we're too worried about what the world wants to say about us instead of who we know we are and are becoming.